

Lost A Case

I am what is called a shy lawyer. It isn't my fault that I rise no higher in my profession; it is fate. When I graduated from the law school my ambition was to be some day chief justice of the United States. In two months I was ready to accept the attorney generalship. Then I fell in the scale to covet a fair practise. And now I am a shy lawyer. I devote my time to separating those whom God has joined together, not the higher, but the lower classes. I have secured a divorce for me of \$5.

One day a young couple came to my office to get divided. Their ages were the man nineteen, the girl eighteen. He wore a threadbare coat that indicated he was or had been a street car conductor.

"Mr. Lawyer," he said. "I suppose it cost a lot to get a divorce. We had to sell our furniture to raise the money. But we got \$50 for it. 'Here it is.'"

He opened a pocketbook and took out five dirty ten dollar bills. His wife stood by looking like a young thundercloud.

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

Both began talking at once, each abusing the other in a disconnected way. I caught as much as I could of what they said, but was unable to gather the slightest cause for divorce from either.

"That'll do," I said. "You," addressing the husband, "have treated your wife abominably. And you," to the wife, "have done a number of things you wouldn't have done had you been older and more experienced. In order to secure a divorce for you you must act harmoniously, for legally the grounds for an action on either side are very weak. You must throw off this antagonism long enough to form with me a plan for separation. I shall be busy for about an hour, and meanwhile I wish you to sit down on that sofa side by side and try to get back to the days when you were courting. Think about the first kiss, the putting on of the engagement ring I see on that round finger. Then the

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Give any other symptoms on a separate sheet.
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wedding and all that. If you keep thinking about these things till I get through some other cases we can all act together for a divorce."

They did as I told them to do, but took seats as far apart as possible and at first it looked as though nothing would be gained. They sat thus, both bolt upright for awhile, but I kept an eye on them and saw that they were trying to keep their minds on what I had indicated. In about half an hour I gathered up some papers and went into another room. When I returned half the distance between them had been eliminated. Encouraged, I hunted for a paper I had left on my table and went out again. When I returned the wife was wiping away tears. The husband, judging from his expression, was endeavoring to steel himself against a reconciliation.

I left the room again, telling them that I would return in about forty minutes, when I should expect them to have got rid of enough antagonism to secure the divorce. "I fear," I said to the husband, "that you, who are more at fault in this matter than your wife, are nourishing the bitterness in you and will spoil it all."

With this I made another trip and was gone an hour. Then returning, I stood at the door listening. I heard the husband saying that it had been all his fault, and the wife saying that it had been all her fault, and they were calling each other "dearie" and "sweetheart" and a lot of other

pet names. I entered the room suddenly and found them locked in each other's arms.

"Well," I said, "I've come to a stopping place in other business and am now ready for you two."

They arose from the sofa, and the husband said they'd been talking the matter over and if I didn't mind the disappointment they would try to get on a while longer. Taking out his pocketbook, he offered to pay me what fee I asked for taking up my time, but I told him there would

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be no charge. I asked him if he couldn't put the money back into his furniture and he said he thought he could. At any rate, he would try. Before they left me I made them promise that if they changed their minds and should conclude, after all, to secure a divorce they would give me the job. This they promised to do as some compensation for my "disappointment" is not having been employed already, for they were too stupid to see through the ruse that had prevented breach between them.

"It's hard on you, Mr. Lawyer, to expect you were going to get a good fee and then not get it, but you ought to have seen that a makeup in order to get the divorce was the same as making up regular."

"Just so, my boy," I replied. "If you come back here again for a divorce I won't be so tar-nation stupid."

They never came back for a divorce, but one day a prosperous looking young man came in my office and asked if I remembered him. I said I did not and he told me that I was the lawyer who had euhred myself out of a fee by not moving quickly enough. He added that my stupidity had been a godsend to him, and he wanted me to come and dine with him and his wife. I went and saw a happy family.

Almost a Miracle

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